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Mabie H.W.

An Undiscovered Island.

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An Undiscovered Island

By

Hamilton Wright Mabie

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To "Sister"
With the Season's Greetings
From
Buster

AN UNDISCOVERED ISLAND

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By

Hamilton Wright Mabie

New York
Dodd, Mead & Company
1907

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AN UNDISCOVERED ISLAND

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I

Come unto these yellow sands,
And then take hands;
Curtsied when you have, and kiss'd
The wild waves whist,
Foot it featly here and there;
And, sweet sprites, the burden bear.

ONE winter evening, some time after the memorable year of our first visit to the Forest of Arden, Rosalind and I were planning a return to that enchanting place, and in the glow of the fire on the hearth were picturing to ourselves the delights that would be ours again, when the clang of the knocker suddenly recalled us from our dreams. Hospitably

inclined, as I trust and believe we are, at that moment an interruption seemed like an intrusion. But our momentary annoyance was speedily dispelled when the library door opened, and, with the freedom which belongs to old friendship, the Poet entered unannounced. No one could have been more welcome on that wintry night than this genial and human soul, bound to us by many ties of familiar association as well as by frequent neighbourliness in the woods of Arden. It had happened again and again that we had found ourselves together in the recesses of the Forest, and enchanting beyond all speech had been those days and nights of mingled talk and dreams.

The Poet is one of the friends whose coming is peculiarly welcome because it always harmonises with the mood of the moment, and no speech is needed to bring us into agreement. Rosalind took the visitor into our plan at once, and urged him to go with us on this mysterious journey; whereupon he told us that, by one of those delightful coincidences which are always happening to people of kindred tastes and aims, this very errand had brought him to our door. The time had come, he said, when he could no longer resist the longing for Arden! We all smiled at that sudden outburst; how well we knew what it meant! After months of going our ways dutifully in the dust and heat of the world,

the longing for Arden would on the instant become irresistible. Come what might, the hunger for perfect comprehension and fellowship, the thirst for the beauty and repose of the deep woods, must be satisfied, and forsaking whatever was in hand we fled incontinently across the invisible boundaries into that other and diviner country. No sooner had the Poet made his confession than we hastened to make ours, and, without further consideration, we resolved the very next day to shake the dust from our feet and escape into Arden. This question settled, a great gaiety seized us, and we began to plan new journeys for the years to come; journeys which had this peculiar charm—that they belonged to a few

kindred spirits; the world knows nothing of them, and when some obscure reference brings them to mind, smiles its sceptical smile, and goes on with its money-getting. Rosalind drew from its hiding-place the chart of this world of the imagination which we were given to studying on long winter evenings, and of which only a few copies exist. These charts are among the few things not to be had for money; if they fall into alien hands they are incomprehensible. It is true of them, as of the books which describe the Forest of Arden, that they have a kind of second meaning, only to be discerned by those whose eyes detect the deeper things of life. It is another peculiarity of these charts that

while science has indirectly done not a little for their completeness, the work of preparing them has fallen entirely into the hands of the poets; not, of course, the writers of verse alone, but those who have had the vision of the great world as it lies in the imagination, and who have heard that deep and incommunicable music which sings at the heart of it.

Rosalind spread this chart on the table, and we drew our chairs around it, noting now one and now another of the famous places of which all men have heard, but which to most men are mere figments of dreams. Here, for instance, in a certain latitude plainly marked on the margin, is that calm sweet land of the Phæacians

where reigns Alcinoüs the great-souled king, and the white-armed Nausicaä sings after her bath on the river's brink:

Without the palace court and near the gate
A spacious garden of four acres lay.
A hedge inclosed it round, and lofty trees
Flourished in generous growth within —the pear
And the pomegranate, and the apple tree
With its fair fruitage, and the luscious fig,
And olive always green. The fruit they bear
Falls not, nor ever fails in winter time
Nor summer, but is yielded all the year.
The ever-blowing west wind causes some
To swell and some to ripen ; pear succeeds
To pear; to apple, apple, grape to grape,
Fig ripens after fig.

Here, as Rosalind moves her

finger, lies the vally of Avalon, whither Arthur went to heal his overmastering sorrow, and where the air is always sweet with the smell of apple blossoms. In this deep wood lives Merlin, still weaving, as of old, the magic spells. There is the castle of the Grail, and as our eyes fall on it, suddenly there comes a hush, and we seem to hear the sublime antiphony, choir answering choir in heavenly melody, as Parsifal raises the cup, and the light from above smites it into sudden glory. We are travelling eastward, touching here and there those names which belong only to the greatest poetry, when Rosalind's finger — the index of our wanderings—suddenly pauses and rests on an island,

not large, as it lies amid that silent sea, but wonderful above all islands to which thought has ever wandered or where imagination has ever made its home. Under the light of the lamp, with Rosalind's face bending over it, no island ever slept in a deeper calm than this little circle of land about which the greatest of the poets once evoked the most marvellous of tempests. Rosalind's finger does not move from that magical point, and, peering on the chart, our eyes suddenly meet, and a single thought is in them all. Why not postpone Arden for the moment and explore the isle of Miranda's morning beauty and Prospero's magical wisdom?

"Why not?" says Rosalind,

speaking aloud, and instead of answering her question the Poet and I are wondering why we have never gone before. Straightway we fall to studying the map more closely; we note the latitude and longitude; it is but a little way from the mainland where stretches the green expanse of the Forest of Arden. We might have gone long ago if we had been a little more adventurous; at least we think we might at the first blush; but when we talk it over, as we proceed to do when Rosalind has rolled up the chart and put it in its place, we are not quite so sure about it. It is one of the singular things about this kind of journeying that one learns how to travel and where to go only by personal observa-

tion. Before we went to Arden, for instance, we had no clear knowledge of any of these countries; we had often heard of them; their names were often on our lips; but they were not real to us. That happy day when Arden ceased to be a dream to us was the beginning of a rapid growth of knowledge concerning these invisible countries; one by one they seemed to rise within the circle of our expanding experience until we became aware that we were masters of a new kind of geography. That delightful discovery was not many years behind us, but this new knowledge had already become so much a part of our lives that we often confused it with the knowledge of commoner things.

That night, before we parted, our plans were completed; on the morrow, when night came, the fire on the hearth would be unlighted, for we should be on Prospero's island.

II

O rejoice
Beyond a common joy; and set it down
With gold on lasting pillars: in one voyage
Did Claribel her husband find at Tunis;
And Ferdinand, her brother, found a wife
Where he himself was lost; Prospero, his dukedom,
In a poor isle; and all of us, ourselves,
Where no man was his own.

"HONEST Gonzalo never spoke truer word," said the Poet, answering Rosalind, who had been quoting the old counsellor's summing up of the common good fortune on the island when Prospero dispelled his enchantments and the shipwrecked company found themselves saved as by miracle. It was our first evening on the island; one of those memorable nights when all

things seem born anew into some larger heritage of beauty. The moon hung low over the quiet sea, sleeping now under the spell of the summer night, as if no storm had ever vexed it. So silent, so hushed was it that but for the soft ripple on the sand we should have thought it calmed in eternal repose. Far off along the horizon the stars hung motionless as the sea; overhead they shone out of the measureless depths of space with a soft and solemn splendour. Not a branch moved on the great trees behind us, folded now in the universal mystery of the night. The little stretch of beech, over whose yellow sands the song of the invisible Ariel once floated, lay in the soft light fit for the feet of fairies, or the gentle ad-

vance and retreat of the sea. The very air, suffused through all that vast immensity with a mysterious light, seemed like a dream of peace.

In such a place, at such an hour, one shrinks from speech as from the word that breaks the spell. When one is so much a part of the sublime order of things that the universal movement of force that streams through all things embraces and thrills him with the consciousness of common fellowship, how vain is all human utterance! The greatest of poems, the sublime harmony in which all things are folded, has never been spoken, and never will be. No lyre in any human hand will ever make those divine chords audible. The poets hear them, know

them, live by them; but no verse contains them. So much a part of that wondrous night were we that any speech would have seemed like a severance of things that were one; all the deep meaning of the hour was clear to us because we were included in it. How long we sat in that silence I do not know; we had forgotten the world out of which we had escaped, and the route by which we came; we knew only that an infinite sea of beauty and wonder rippled on the beach at our feet, and that over us the heavens were as a delicate veil, beyond which diviner loveliness seemed waiting on the verge of birth.

It was Rosalind who spoke at last, and spoke in words which flashed the human truth of the

hour into our thoughts. On this island we had found ourselves; so often lost, at times so long forgotten, in the busy world that lay afar off. And then we fell a-talking of the island and of all the kindred places where men have found homes for their souls; sweet and fragrant retreats whence the noise of strife and toil died into a faint murmur, or was lost in some vast silence. At Milan, Prospero found the cares of state so irksome, the joy of "secret studies" so alluring, that, despairing of harmonising things so alien, he took refuge with his books, and found his "library was dukedom large enough." But the problem was not solved by this surrender; out of the library, as out of the dukedom, he was set

adrift, homeless and friendless, until he set foot on the island where he was to rule with no divided sway. Here was his true home; here the spirits of the air and the powers of the earth were his ministers; here his word seemed part of the elemental order; he spoke and it was done, for the winds and the sea obeyed him. And when, in the working out of destiny which he himself directed, he returns to the dukedom from which he had been thrust out, he is no longer the Prospero of ineffective days. Henceforth he will rule Milan as he rules the quiet dukedom of his books; he has become a master of life and time, and his sovereignty will never again be disputed.

Prospero did not find the is-

land; he created it. It was the necessity of his life that he should fashion this bit of territory out of the great sea, that here his soul might learn its strength and win its freedom; that here, far from dukedom and courtiers, he might discover that a great soul creates its own world and lives its own life. Milan may cast him out, as did Florence another of his kind, but this human rejection will but bring him into that empire which no enmity may touch, in the calm of whose divinely ordered government treasons are unknown. No man finds himself until he has created a world for his own soul; a world apart from care and weakness and the confusions of strife, in which the faiths that inspire him

and the ideals that lead him are the great and lasting verities. To this world-building all the great poetic minds are driven; within this invisible empire alone can they reconcile the life that surrounds them with the life that floats like a dream before them. No great mind is ever at rest until in some way the Real and the Ideal are found to be one. Literature is full of these beautiful homes of the soul, reared without the sound of chisel or hammer by the magic of the Imagination—divinest of the faculties, since it is the only one which creates. The other faculties observe, record, compare, combine; the imagination alone uses the brush, the chisel, or the pen!

If one were to record these

kingdoms of the mind, how long and luminous would be the catalogue! The golden age and the fabled Atlantis of the elder poets; the "Republic" of the broad-browed Athenian; the secret gardens, impregnable castles, sweet and inaccessible retreats of the mediæval fancy; the Paradise of Dante; the enchanting world through which the Fairy Queen moves; the "Utopia" of the noble More; the Forest of Arden—what visions of peace, what glimpses of beauty, accompany every name! To all these worlds of supernal loveliness there is a single key; fortunate among men are they who hold it!

III

Be not afraid; the isle is full of noises,
Sounds and sweet airs that give delight and hurt not.
Sometimes a thousand twanging instruments
Will hum about mine ears; and sometimes voices,
That, if I then had waked after long sleep,
Will make me sleep again; and then, in dreaming,
The clouds methought would open, and show riches
Ready to drop upon me; that, when I waked,
I cried to dream again.

When the sun rose the next morning, we rose with it, eager to explore our little world about which the sea never ceased to sing its mighty hymn of solitude and mystery. There was something impressive in the consciousness of our isolation: be-

tween us and any noise of human occupation the waters were stretched as a barrier against which all sound died into silence. There was something enchanting in the beauty and strangeness of this tiny continent, unreported by any geography, unmarked on any chart save that which a few possess as a kind of sacred heritage, untravelled as yet by our eager feet. There was something thrilling in the associations that touched the island with such a light as never fell from sun or star. With beating hearts we set out on that wondrous exploration. Who does not remember the thrill of the first discovery of a new world ; that joy of the soul in possession of a great new truth which passes

all speech? There are hours in this troubled life when the mists are lifted and float away like faint clouds against the blue, and the great world lies like a splendid vision before us, and "the immeasurable heavens break open to the highest," and in a sudden rift of human limitation the whole sublime order opens before us, sings to us out of the fathomless depths of its harmony, thrills us with a sudden sense of God and of the undiscovered range and splendour of our lives; and when they have passed, these hours remain with us in the afterglow of clearer vision and deeper faith. Such hours are the peculiar joy of those who hold the key of the imagination in their grasp and are able to unlock the gate

of dreams, or make themselves the companion of the great explorers in the realms of truth and beauty. These are the secret joys which people solitude and make the quiet days one long draught of inspiration.

In such a mood our quest began and ended. We skirted the beach; we plunged deep into recesses of the woods; we stretched ourselves on the broad expanse of greensward in the shade of the great boughs; we followed the rivulet to the hushed and shadowy solitude where it issued from the moss-grown rock; wherever we bent our steps the song of the sea followed us, and the day was calm and cool as with its breadth and freshness. The island had its own beauty; the beauty of

virgin forests and untrodden paths, of a certain fragrant sweetness gathered in years of untroubled solitude, of a certain pastoral repose such as comes to Nature when man is remote; but that which gave us the thrill of something strangely sweet and satisfying, something apart from the world we had left, was not anything we saw with eye. All that was visible was beautiful, but it was a loveliness not unfamiliar; it was the invisible continually breaking in upon our consciousness that laid us under a spell. We were conscious of something lovelier than we saw; a world not to be discerned by sight, but real and unspeakably beautiful to the soul. Even to Caliban the isle was "full of noises";

"sounds and sweet airs that give delight" did not escape his brutish sense. Sometimes "a thousand twangling instruments" hummed about his ears; sometimes voices whose soft music was akin to sleep floated about him; and sometimes the clouds "would open and show riches ready to drop upon" him. There was a sweet enchantment in the air to which the dullest could not be indifferent. It hovered over us like some finer beauty, just beyond the vision of sense, and yet as real, almost as tangible, as the things we touched and saw.

Alone as we were upon the little island, we felt the diviner world of which that tiny bit of earth was part; we knew the higher beauty of which all

that visible loveliness was but a sign and symbol. The song of the sea, breathed from we knew not what depths of space, was not more real than this melody, haunting the island and dropping from the air like blossoms from a ripening tree. Turn where we would, this music went with us; it mingled with the murmur of the trees; it blended with the limpid note of the rivulet; it melted with the breeze that swept across the grassy places. All day, and for many another day, we were conscious of a larger world of harmony and beauty folding in our little world of tree and soil; we lived in it as freely and made it ours as fully as the bit of earth beneath our feet. Through all our talk this thread of melody

was run, and our very thoughts were set to this unfailing music. In those days the Poet wrote no verses; what need of verse when poetry itself, that deep and breathing beauty of the soul of things, filled every hour and overflowed all the channels of thought and sense!

But if we were dumb in the hearing of a music beyond our mastery, we were not blind to the parable conveyed in every sound and sight; in those delicious days and nights a great truth cleared itself forever in our minds. We know henceforth how all dream-worlds, all beautiful hopes and visions and ideals, are fashioned. They are not of human making; they but make visible things which already exist unseen; they but

make audible sounds which are already vocal unheard. He who dreams, sleeps, and another fills the chamber of his brain with moving figures; he who aspires, hopes and believes, unlocks the door, and another world, already furnished with beauty, lies before him. Our ideals are God's realities. We build the new worlds of our knowledge out of the dust of worlds already swinging in space; the stately homes of our imagination rise on foundations of the common earth. Prospero's island was made of common soil; flowers, trees, and grass grow on it as they grow about the homes of work and care. The same sea washes its shores which beats upon the coasts of ancient continents;

over it bends that same sky which enfolds all the generations of men. Prospero's island is no mirage, hovering unreal and evanescent on the far horizon; no impalpable phantom of reality floating like some strayed flower on the lovely sea of dreams. It is as solid as the earth, as real as the soul that fashioned it. No miracle was wrought, no law violated, in its making. Beautiful, true, and enduring, it lies upon the waters; a haven for men in the storms that beat upon the high seas of this troubled life. That which is strange and wonderful about it is the music which forever hovers about it; that which makes it enchanted ground is the sound of voices sweet as the quietness of sleep,

the vision of clouds ready to drop unmeasured riches! An island solid as the great world out of which it was fashioned, but sweet with heavenly voices and sublime with heavenly visions —such is the island of Prospero's enchantments.

And such are all true ideals, dreams, and aspirations. They have their roots in the same earth whence the commonest weed grows; but the light and life of the heavens are theirs also. In them the visible and the invisible are harmonised; in them the real finds its completion in the ideal. The common earth is common only to those who are deaf to the voices and blind to the visions which wait on it and make its flight a music and its path a light. Out

of these common things the great artists build the homes of our souls. Rock-founded are they, and broad-based on our mother earth; but they have windows skyward, and there, above the tumult of the little earth, the great worlds sing.

IV

You do yet taste
Some subtilities o' the isle, that will not
let you
Believe things certain.

ONE brilliant morning, the sky cloudless and the sea singing under a freshening wind, we sat under a great tree, with a bit of soft sward before us, and talked of Prospero. In that place the master presence was always with us; there was never an hour in which we did not feel the spell of his creative spirit. We were always secretly hoping that we should come upon him in some secluded place, his staff unbroken, and his book undrowned. But what need had we of sight while the island en-

compassed us and the multitudinous music filled the air?

On that fair morning the magical beauty of the world possessed us, and our talk, blending unconsciously with the music of the invisible choir, was broken by long pauses. The Poet was saying that the world thought of Prospero as a magician, a wonder-worker, whose thought borrowed the fleetness of Ariel, whose staff unleashed the tempest and sent it back to its hiding-place when its work was done, and in whose book were written all manner of charms and incantations. This was the Prospero whom Caliban knew, and this is the Prospero whom the world remembers. "For myself," said he, "I often try to forget the mira-

cles, so stained and defiled seem the great artists by this homage which is only another form of materialism. The search for signs and wonders is always vulgar; it defiles every great spirit who compromises with it, because it puts the miracle in place of the truth. That which gives a wonder its only dignity and significance is the spiritual power which it evidences and the spiritual knowledge which it conveys. To the greatest of teachers this hunger for miracles was a bitter experience; he who came with the mystery of the heavenly love in his soul must have felt defiled by the homage rendered as to a necromancer, a doer of strange things. The curiosity which draws men to the masters of the arts has no

real honour in it; the only recognition which is real and lasting is that which springs from the perception of truth and beauty disclosed anew in some noble form. Prospero was a magician, but he was much more and much greater than a wonder-worker; not Caliban, but Ferdinand and Miranda and Gonzalo, are the true judges of his power. Prospero was the master spirit of the world which moved about him. He alone knew its secret and used its forces; on him alone rested the government of this marvellous realm. His command had stirred the seas and sent the winds abroad which brought Milan and Naples within his hand; at his bidding the isle was full of sounds; Ariel served him with

tireless devotion; he read the sweet thought that flashed from Miranda to Ferdinand; he unearthed the base conspiracy of Caliban, Trinculo, and Stephano: he read the treacherous hearts of Antonio and Sebastian; in his hand all these threads were gathered, and upon all these lives his will was imposed. In that majestic drama of human character and action, powers of air and earth, the highest and the lowest alike serving, it is a lofty soul and a noble mind possessed by a great purpose, which control and triumph. The magical arts are simply the means by which a great end is served; when the work is accomplished, the staff will be broken and the book sunk beneath the sea,

lower than any sounding of plummet."

"Yes," said Rosalind, impulsively, carrying the thought another step forward, "Prospero deals with natural, substantial things for great, real ends, not with magical powers for fantastic purposes. When it falls in his way, he evokes forces so unusual that they seem supernatural to those who do not understand his power, but the end which lies before him is always real, enduring, and noble; something which belongs to the eternal order of things."

"For that matter," I interrupted, "it grows more and more difficult to distinguish between the forces and the achievements that we have thought real and possible, and

those which have seemed only dreams and visions. Men are doing things every day by mechanical agencies which the most famous of the old magicians failed to accomplish. The visions of great minds are realities discovered a little in advance of their universal recognition."

"As I was saying," continued the Poet, "most men hold Prospero to be a mere wonder-worker, a magician who puts his arts on and off with his robe; they do not know that he stands for the greatest force in the world. For the Imagination is not only the inspiring leader of men in their strange journey through life, but their nearest, most constant, and most practical helper and sustainer. That our souls would

have starved without the Imagination we are all, I think, agreed; without Imagination we should have seen and remembered nothing on our long journey but the path at our feet. The heavens above us, the great, mysterious world about us, would have meant no more to us than to the birds and the beasts that have perished without thought or memory of the beauty which has encompassed them. All this the Imagination has interpreted for us. It has fashioned life for us, and the dullest mind that plods and counts and dies is ministered to and enriched by it. It does magical things. It puts on its robe and opens its book, and straightway the heavens rain melody and drop riches upon

us. But this is its play. In these displays of its art it hints at the resources at its command, at the marvels it will yet bring to pass. Meanwhile it has made the earth hospitable for us and taught men how to live above the brutes."

The Poet stopped abruptly, as if he had been caught in the act of preaching, and Rosalind gave the sermon a delightful ending.

"I wonder," she said, "if love would be possible without the Imagination? For the heart of love is the perception of a deep and genuine fellowship of the soul, and the end of love is the happiness which comes through ministry. Could we understand a human soul or serve it if the Imagination did not

aid us with its wonderful light? Is it not the Imagination which enables me to put myself in another's place, and so to sympathise with another's sorrow and share another's joy? Could a man feel the sufferings of a class or a race or the world if the Imagination did not open these things to him? And if he did not understand, could he serve?"

No one answered these questions, for they made us aware on the instant how dependent are all the deep and beautiful relations of life on this wonderful faculty. But for this "master light of all our seeing," how small a circle of light would lie about our feet, how vast a darkness would engulf the world!

V

O wonder!
How many goodly creatures are there here!
How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world,
That has such people in 't!

We had never thought of the island in the old days save as lashed by tempests; but now the suns rose and set, dawn wore its shining veil and night its crest of stars and not a cloud darkened the sky; we seemed to be in the heart of a vast and changeless calm. There was no monotony in the unbroken succession of the days, but the changes were wrought by light, not by darkness. The singing of the sea, never rising into those shrill upper notes which bode disaster, nor sinking into

the deep lower tones through which the awful thunder of the elements breaks, came to us as out of the depths of an infinite repose. The youth of an untroubled world was in it. The joy of effortless activities breathed through it. We felt that we were once more in the morning of the world's day, and hope gave the keynote to all our thought. Life is divided between hope and memory; when memory holds the chief place, the shadows are lengthening and the day declining.

It was one of the pleasures of the island that we were alone upon it. There was no trace of any other human occupation, although we never forgot those who had been before us in these enchanting scenes. One morn-

ing, when we had been talking about the delight of seclusion, Rosalind said that, although the silence and repose were really medicinal, people had never seemed so attractive to her as now when she remembered them under the spell of the island. It seemed to her, as she recalled them now, that the dull people had an interest of their own, the vulgar people were not without dignity, nor the bad people without noble qualities. The Poet, who had evidently been giving himself the luxury of dreaming, declared that we cannot know people save through the Imagination, and that lack of Imagination is at the bottom of all pessimism in philosophy, religion, and personal experience.

A fact taken by itself and detached from the whole of which it is part is always hard, bare, repellent; it must be seen in its relations if one would perceive its finer and inner beauty; and it is the Imagination alone which sees things as a whole. The theologians who have stuck to what they call logic have spread a veil of sadness over the world which the poets must dissipate. "I do not mean," he added, "that there are not sombre and terrible aspects of life, but that these things have been separated from the whole, and discerned only in their bare and crushing isolated force. The real significance of things lies in their interpretation, and the Imagination is the only interpreter."

I had often had the same thought, and found infinite consolation in it; indeed, I rested in it so securely that I would trust myself with far more confidence to the poets than to the logicians. The guess of a great poetic mind has as solid ground under it as the speculation of a scientist; it differs from the scientific theory only in that it is an induction from a greater number of significant facts. The Imagination follows the arc until it "comes full circle"; observation halts and waits for further sight.

Rosalind thought it very beautiful that Miranda's first glance at men should have discovered them so fair and noble; there was evil enough in some of them, but standing beside

Prospero Miranda saw only the "brave new world." I remembered at that moment that even Caliban discloses to the Imagination the germ of a human development; has not another poet written his later story and recorded the birth of his soul? It was characteristic of Rosalind that she should see the people in the marvellous drama through Miranda's eyes, and that straightway the whole world of men and women should reveal itself to her in a new light. "To see the good in people," she said, "is not so much a matter of charity as of justice. Our judgments of others fail oftenest through lack of Imagination. We fail to see all the facts; we see one or two very clearly, and at once

form an opinion. To see the whole range of a human character involves an intellectual and spiritual quality which few of us possess. There is so little justice among us because we possess so little intelligence. I ought not to pronounce judgment on a fellow-creature until I know all that enters into his life; until I can measure all the forces of temptation and resistance; until I can give full weight to all the facts in the case. In other words, I am never in a position to judge another."

The Poet evidently assented to this statement, and I could not gainsay it; is there not the very highest authority for it? The time will come when there will be a universal surrender of

that authority which we have been usurping all these centuries. We shall not cease to recognize the weakness and folly of men, but we shall cease to decide the exact measure of personal responsibility. That is a function for which we were never qualified; it is a task which belongs to infinite wisdom. The Imagination helps us to understand others because it reveals the vast compass of the influences that converge on every human soul like the countless rivulets that give the river its volume and impetus. To look at men and women through the vision of the Imagination is to see a very different race than that which meets our common sight. To this larger vision, within which the past supple-

ments the present, the great army of men and women moves to a solemn and appealing music. The pathos of life touches them with an indescribable dignity; the work of life gives them an unspeakable nobility. Under the meanest exterior there are one knows not what tragedies of denied hopes and unappeased longings; behind the mask of evil there shines one knows not what struggling virtue overborne by impulses that flow from the past like irresistible torrents. Hidden under all manner of disguises—weakness, poverty, ignorance, vulgarity—there waits a world of ideals never realized but never lost; the fire of aspiration burns in a thousand thousand souls that are maimed and broken, bruised and baffled,

but which still survive. Is not this the unquenchable spark that some day, in freer air, shall break into white flame? It is the Imagination only that discerns in a thousand contradictions, a thousand obscurities, the large design to be revealed when the ring of the hammer has ceased, the dust of toil been laid, the scaffolding removed, and the finished structure suddenly discloses the miracle wrought among those who were blind.

VI

I might call him
A thing divine; for nothing natural
I ever saw so noble.

ROSALIND was deeply interested in Prospero; and when the Poet and I had talked long and eagerly about him, she often threw into the current some comment or suggestion that gave us quite another and clearer view of his genius and work. But at heart Rosalind's chief interest was in Miranda and Ferdinand. The presence of Prospero had given the island a solemn and far-reaching significance in the geography of the world; Miranda and Ferdinand had left an unfailing and beguiling charm about the place. If we could have known the point where

these two fresh and unspoiled natures met, I am confident we should have stayed there by common but unspoken consent. After all our discoveries in this mysterious world, youth and love remain the first and sweetest in our thoughts: there is nothing which takes their place, nothing which imparts their glow, nothing which conveys such deep and beautiful hints of the better things to be. Miranda had known no companionship but her father's, no world but the sea-encircled island, no life but the secluded and eventless existence in that wave-swept solitude. She had had the rare good fortune to ripen under the spell of pure, high thoughts, and so near to Nature that no grosser currents of influence had borne

her away from the most wholesome and consoling of all companionships. Ferdinand came from the shows of royalty and small falsities of courtiers; the palace, the city, the crowded, self-seeking, hypocritical world had encompassed him from youth, robbed him of privacy, cheated him of that repose which brings a man to a knowledge of himself, and despoils him of those sweet and tranquillising memories which grow out of a quiet childhood as the wild flowers spring along the edges of the woods.

Coming, one from the stillness of a solitary island and the other from the roar and rush of a court and a city, these two met, and there flashed from one to the other that sudden and

thrilling intelligence which on the instant gives life a new interpretation and the world an all-conquering loveliness. Nowhere, surely, has the eternal romance found more significant setting than on this magical island, about which sea and sky, day and night, weave and weave again those vanishing webs of splendour in which daybreak and evening stars are snared; with such music throbbing on the air as invisible spirits make when the command of the master is on them! Here, surely, was the home of this drama of the soul, the acting of which on the troubled stage of life is a perpetual appeal to faith and hope and joy! For youth and love are shining words in the vocabulary of the Imagination

—words which contain the deepest of present and predict the sweetest of future happiness. So deeply interwoven is the real significance of these words with the Imagination that, separated from it, they lose all their magical glow and beauty. Youth moves in no narrow territory; its boundary lines fade out into infinity. It feels no iron hand of limitation; it discerns no impassable wall of restriction. Life stretches away before and about it limitless as space and full of unseen splendours as the stars that crowd and brighten it. The great wings of hope, unbruised yet by any beatings of the later tempests, shine through the air, lustrous and tireless, as if all flights were possible. And far

off, on the remote horizon lines where sight fails, the mirage of dreams dissolves and reappears in a thousand alluring forms.

Love knows even less of limitation and infirmity. Its eyes, sometimes oblivious of the things most obvious, pierce the remotest future, read the innermost soul, discern the last and highest fruitions. The seed in its hand, hard, black, unbroken, is already a flower to its thought; out of the bare, stern facts of the present its magical touch brings one knows not what of joy and loveliness. And when youth and love are one, the heavens are not bright enough for their thoughts, nor eternity long enough for their deeds. Amid the shadows of life they seem to have caught a

momentary radiance from beyond the clouds ; amid sorrows and sins and all manner of weariness they are the recurring vision and revelation of the eternal order. All the world waits on them and rejoices in them ; and the bitter knowledge of what lies before the eager feet, waiting with passionate hope on the threshold, does not lessen the perennial interest in that fair picture ; for in youth and love are realised the universal ideals of men. Youth and love are the mortal synonyms of immortality ; all that freshness of spirit, buoyancy of strength, energy of hope, boundlessness of joy, completeness and glory of life, imply, are typified in these two things, always vanishing and yet always

reappearing among men. Wearing the beautiful masks of youth and love, the gods continually revisit the earth, and in their luminous presence faith forever rebuilds its shattered temples.

That which makes youth and love so precious to us is the play they give to the Imagination; indeed, the better part of them both is compounded of Imagination. The horizons recede from their gaze because the second sight of Imagination is theirs—that prescience which pierces the mists which enfold us, and discerns the vaster world through which we move for the most part with halting feet and blinded eyes. Youth knows that it was born to life and power and exhaustless resources; love knows that it

has found and shall forever possess those beautiful ideals which are the passion of noble natures.

Are they blind, these flower-crowned, joy-seeking figures; or are we blind who smile through tears at their illusions? On this island there is but one answer to that question; for do we not know that they only who believe and trust discern the truth, and that to faith and hope alone is true wisdom given? "As yet lingers the twelfth hour and the darkness, but the time will come when it shall be light, and man will awaken from his lofty dreams and find—his dreams all there, and that nothing is gone save his sleep."

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